

CAMP LORE:

WITH NOTES ON OUTFIT AND EQUIPMENT.

BY ALFRED BALCH.



WHILE no man can learn the lore of camps without a practical experience thereof, he may yet gather from the printed line what he will have to do in another field than that to which he is accustomed. For there is this which is common in all successful camping, from the pole to the equator—the power of adapting one's self to new surroundings and of making the best of the circumstances. If a man has learned to discard the conventional methods of life and to enjoy existence in the woods, he can always fit himself into a new form of this existence with but little trouble. And in this article I propose to speak of some of the things which will make that existence more pleasant.

By common consent of all races of mankind some form of house is a necessity. To begin, then, on the extreme north, the Esquimaux snow hut is an excessively easy thing to make. Trace a circle on a level bit of ground, twelve feet in diameter. From the nearest bank of packed snow cut bricks about fifteen inches by twenty by eight. What I mean by packed snow is where a drift has settled down and become solid enough to make the bricks handle easily. Place the bricks around on the circle, trimming the edges so that they touch throughout the whole width. Then carefully level this first row off, the second row is placed with from three to five inches overlap toward the centre. Remember, the greater the overlap the lower the hut. Trimming and finishing this as before, the third row goes in place. As you continue building and as the walls rise higher, keep them as even as possible, that is, keep the overlap the same. When the hut is finished you may, if you choose, place a cake of fresh-water ice in the top for a window. Then smooth down the walls inside and cut a doorway through which to crawl out. This form of house represents the extreme northern line in camp making, and I do not suppose that one man out of

a million in this country will ever want to build one unless it be as a play house for his boys.

But what is called a snow camp in the northern woods is something which is very useful if a man is out after moose or cariboo in winter without a tent. It is very easily and quickly made and is exceedingly comfortable. Find a place where the snow is seven or eight feet deep. It should be, if possible, under the lee of some woods or even bushes. Mark out a big triangle on the snow, from six to ten feet wide at the widest part and about ten feet long. Then dig this out. At the small end make a path leading up to the surface. Cut down plenty of *sapin* or flat fir branches and make a good bed in the upper end, and at the lower or small end build the fire. You sleep with your feet to the fire. If it be snowing lay some light poles across the big end of the hole and place *sapin* upon them. I do not know any place in the world where a man can sleep more delightfully than he can in one of these camps, muffled up in his blanket bag, and it is surprising how warm it is as long as the fire is burning. If that goes out a sensation of being gradually frozen will wake you up, when you will lie as quiet as possible in order to see whether some other fellow will not make up the fire. This is invariably done by the man who can stand cold the least. Always see that there is plenty of dry wood cut and ready.

Change the season from the winter to the summer and in these same woods we may have to build a log hut or a wigwam. The first involves a considerable amount of work and is not to be undertaken lightly, nor unless you expect to remain in one place for a considerable length of time. The second is not difficult to make and under some circumstances a knowledge of how to build it is important. Select two young trees about ten feet apart and chop them off about eight feet from the ground. Dig up a fir root and pound it on a stone until you can draw off the long cord-like fibres, which the Indians and voyageurs call *watape*. With these bind a

pole between your two uprights. Cut other poles and place them against this ridge pole, the ends resting on the ground and the tops tied to the ridge pole with the *watape*. These side poles should not project more than two inches beyond the ridge. You can pin the lower ends to the earth if you like by cutting crotch pins. These are made of branches which have a side branch for the crotch. When all the side poles are in place you are ready to cover the wigwam. This is done with sheets of birch bark placed side by side over the poles and held in place by cross sticks tied to the framework. A big sheet of bark being placed over the ridge pole as a cap, the wigwam is waterproof. The ends are closed up with boles-driven in and fastened to the frame and covered as before with bark. This hut may be thatched if no bark can be obtained, and for this purpose rushes are as good as anything.

Small poles are placed across the side poles and lashed into position about four inches apart. Then collect the rushes, and taking a handful of them double them over one of these small poles, having the upper ends rather longer than the lower. When you have a row of them on the first cross pole, place a light switch of willow on them and weave it under the side poles to hold the rushes down. The next row goes on in the same way. When you have reached the ridge pole any sort of bark that can be got off in a long sheet will do for a cap, but if this cannot be secured you can cap with rushes. Although the process of thatching reads as though it were somewhat tedious, it is in fact easy enough after a little practice. Cedar bark will do instead of birch, but in covering a wigwam with cedar you have to lay alternate sheets lapping into each other like this . A word about stripping bark from a tree. Select your tree, which should be as straight as you can find, and cut the bark through around the foot. This is ordinarily called circling. Circle it again high enough up to give you the length of sheet needed. Then cut it in a straight line between the circles. With the head of your axe pound it along this cut until the edges are loose. Make a wooden chisel about four inches wide on the edge and hammer this in between the bark and the trunk. The process is much quicker if you have another man to hold the free edge away from the trunk.

The principle involved in building houses in the bush is the same wherever you have to erect one. The *paja* hut of the tropics is merely a frame of poles lashed together and thatched with *paja* or palm leaves. In fact, anyone who has ever built a wigwam in the northern woods can build a *paja* in the southern. But a word upon the selection of the camping ground is necessary.

In the northern woods sudden floods are not common enough to be dreaded. The ground for the tent may therefore be chosen close to a stream, and the tent pitched or the wigwam built at an elevation of, say, six feet above the surface of the water. If a hillside is chosen be sure to pick a ground that is not sunken. It often happens that there is at the side of a hill a sort of hollow which is almost level, and men who are green at the work generally think this the best place to tent. If a rainstorm comes on, such a hollow will collect water quickly and it is difficult to drain. When the tent is pitched on the top of a small knoll the ground drains itself. When it is on the side of hill a V-shaped drain, with the point up the hill, will keep it free of water. But when you are camping in tropical countries much greater care is necessary in selecting the ground. If you are near a river look around for flood marks. These are dead sticks and debris left by the water along the highest line it reached. Pitch your tent or build your camp above these, for a flood comes up in a night sometimes. In a fever country select the top of a hill if possible, high enough up to keep you above the fever mists which rise at night from the swampy ground. It is more trouble to carry water, but it diminishes your chance of getting sick. In southern countries clear the ground carefully of all dead sticks and leaves before lying down to rest, as you will thereby run less chance of getting stung by scorpions and centipedes.

And speaking of these nuisances brings me naturally to the question of having a hammock to sleep in. If you use one get the cloth hammock rather than the net. Many people imagine that they cannot sleep in the hammocks owing to the bent position of the body. If they will place themselves on the bias, so to speak, *i.e.*, crossing the hammock diagonally, they will find it as flat as a bed. If there are no fixed poles to fasten the ends to, a couple of sticks tied together at one end

and rigged like shears, with a guy line or two to stout pegs driven well into the ground, will sling the hammock perfectly. In South America mosquito nets or *toldas*, as they are called, are made with long sleeves through which the hammock strings go and form a perfect protection against insects. Personally speaking, I have a great belief in the hammock, and even if one does not use it to sleep in it is the source of no end of comfort on a long trip. All that I said in the May number of the magazine about tents applies with double force to camping on the plains. There these portable houses of canvas are a necessity, for without them you must either sleep in the open, under the wagon or the wagon cover. Poles, if you use the bell or A tent, have to be carried, and the ridge pole should be jointed. Have the guy lines run through holes in the pegs. If your trip is a long one it is well to have the most important pegs, at least, of iron. Here, again, that tent of Lieutenant Hamilton would be exceedingly good. To your list of camp stores add vaseline in pound tins. It is the best grease for your guns, and is so useful as a salve for man and beast that you could hardly get along without it. Carry candles, with some form of portable candlestick, for it is melancholy to be forced to get along without a light.

For food supplies the directions given before still apply. It is, however, important that you have an ample supply of raw onions. Each man should carry some of these vegetables in his pocket or his saddle bags, because if water is scarce chewing a small piece slowly will relieve thirst. The onion is also the best thing to use in an alkali region, for it not only allays the thirst but softens the lips and destroys the horrible taste of the alkali dust. The Mexican dried beef, when it is well made, is not bad to eat, and an enormous quantity of it can be stored in a small space. For the plains bacon should be substituted for pork in your supply list, as the latter spoils in short order if it is not kept under the brine, and a keg of this is a sloppy thing to carry in a wagon, and is out of the question with pack animals.

If you are traveling in the far South, along or below the Mexican line, you will need a *machete* or one of those long, sword-like knives which all Spanish Americans use. Do not get it too long; a twenty-inch blade is good enough. It is

very useful when you are riding in the southern woods, where there are many vines. It should be carried on the right side of the saddle, in front of the leg and in a convenient position. For this southern work, where the heat is great, anything carried in the pocket is apt to be injured by perspiration. The South Americans meet this difficulty by using a *carriel*, which is simply a leather bag divided into several separate pockets and slung over the shoulder by a strap or band. When on horseback you slip the strap down until it rests on the right side, the bag hanging down on the left. It is a great convenience in many ways. When in the South, and in fact for any country where dysenteric maladies are common, a most useful portion of one's outfit is the cummerbund. This should be made of flannel and long enough to go once and three-quarters around the waist. The band must be four inches wide in the centre, sloping gradually to two and a half at one end and three at the other. Three-sixteenths of the whole length, from the wider end, a slit should be cut, through which the other end is put when the band is worn. It may have three thicknesses of flannel in the main part and two in the ends, the whole thing being quilted well. It is secured by safety pins. It is worn over the abdomen and small of the back and is the greatest protection against affections of the bowels. This pattern, by the way, is known as the Ceylon cummerbund and is the best in use.

If you use the Spanish riding trousers, which are very good for traveling in, but poor things if you have to walk much, they may be made of canvas, of waterproof cloth or of skin. Those of goatskin are very good for winter work, as they keep the legs warm, but in a rainy country those of waterproof cloth are the best. A good receipt for waterproofing boots is the following: Take equal parts of resin, wax and tallow, melt over the fire and mix in a few drops of strong carbolic acid. Apply the stuff hot to the leather and work it in thoroughly with the hand. If your boots get wet, filling them with barley when you take them off will prevent the leather contracting as it dries. It does no harm to have a box of these self-fastening buttons in the possible sack, nor will a pack of cards or a pocket chess box be out of place. Maps are of more importance in the West and Southwest than they are in the woods.

You can take the tin cooking pail with its lamp, described in a former article, and make a canvas bag to hold it. This may be slung to the saddle on the left side, behind the leg. It will come in very handily should you be forced to make a solitary camp. I may point out that everything hung to the saddle should fasten below as well as above, to prevent its banging all around when you gallop. Of course, when you have a home camp, from which you go on hunting trips, many of these things are left there during the day.

In these days of almost universal amateur photography many men would like to have a camera in camp with them. It takes but a second to "shoot" a view, and as there is no necessity of developing the plates until you get home, there is little trouble involved. If you carry one, have a camera case made of strong canvas, with a "telescope" top. Each part must get two good coats of paint. Have wooden boxes made of three-quarter inch stuff, well dovetailed together, and with a locked top. Each box should hold four boxes of plates. The only difficult thing connected with the work is transferring the plates to and from the plate holders. Of course you can get the necessary dark room at night, when you can work by your ruby light. This light is difficult to carry, or, rather, was. Now they make collapsing lanterns, which work very well. The pleasure which photographs of your camps, of any big game you may kill and of picturesque scenes during the trip, will give to yourself and your friends will a great deal more than pay for any trouble which the camera may give you. I have carried a camera for hundreds of miles in a rough country, and I did not find it a nuisance.

You will need a hank of saddle thread, a piece of saddler's wax, some needles and an awl or two. These can all go in the possible sacks, the awls being stuck into corks and the needles carried in a roll of some kind. Many things which you will want are not mentioned in this article? because I have already described them in the May number of *OUTING*, to which I refer you when making up your kit for the plains.

In these days it has become more and more the thing for ladies to join camping parties. I need not say that I think this a good thing, provided always the fairer section of the party does not expect to

find a drawing room in the woods. No mode of life can do them more good if they will only consent to take it as it comes and put up with the unavoidable hardships. A lady's outfit is not hard to get up. Each one needs three pairs of stout shoes, eight pairs of heavy stockings, two pairs of long leggings made of stout cloth and buttoning on the outside. The buttons should have a leather cord run through the shanks. Two pairs of heavy flannel knickerbockers will be useful. The dress should be made of flannel, loose in the waist and with skirts that do not come below the middle of the calf. Two of these dresses are needed. A straw hat with a good veil will be sufficient for the head, and a long pair of buck or dog skin gauntlets for the hands will be found comfortable. Other clothes must be selected from the standpoint of what is absolutely necessary. For the sleeping arrangements duplicate those already described. I do not, of course, suppose that ladies will join winter camping parties, because the fatigue of snow shoeing or the exposure on horseback is generally too much for them. If a lady is a member of a party on the plains her riding habit should be short enough to walk in and be made of brown cotton jean. The golden rule for women in camp is to have nothing tight about their clothes. Be comfortable, and remember that in camp the more comfortable you are the more fashionable you are considered. It is a good plan to carry a damp sponge in a rubber bag. This with a towel goes into a small bag of strong cotton, which may be carried in such fashion as you choose. The comfort to be derived from sponging the face off when one is hot and dusty and then giving it a rub with the towel cannot be overestimated. In fact, I have never seen a man who did not take kindly to this device when traveling in the cars. Two or three silk handkerchiefs for the neck will be found of great service. The underclothing should be made of colored percale or linen, or, better still, the woven underclothing such as men wear, either Balbriggan or light merino, should be purchased. The night clothes should be made of something heavy.

In northern and southern camping trips there is generally plenty of water to be found easily. In the southwest this most necessary article is somewhat more scarce. Generally the guides know the wells and they will see that you camp near one. It

may happen, however, that you are left to your own resources in this matter, and in that case it becomes necessary for you to know how to find water. The first guide to which you can trust is the instinct of your animals. If they are bronchos or mustangs, or if they are mules bred out of mustang mares, they seem to have a faculty of scenting out water. They will either take you to a well or stream, or if the water is near the surface they will paw at the gravel. In such case, dig. In searching for water, choose the bed of a stream and work your way up to it. If you find plants growing near it, their presence is an indication that is favorable. In digging a well abandon it at once if you come to quicksand, for it is labor lost. If you anticipate being in a country where you will have to search for water, it pays to carry one of the driven well tubes and a pump, as they do not take up much room and save an enormous amount of work.

Bronchos will often take you to water which is so strongly alkaline that you cannot drink it. In this case fill the kettle or pot with the water and set it on the fire. Pour in of muriatic acid—of which you should always have a good supply in a glass-stoppered bottle—a small quantity, and then boil the water. It will precipitate a white sediment and will be drinkable. This muriatic acid, by the way, is harmless enough if you do not take too much of it, and it will kill many of the germs found in stagnant water. When, however, you are in southern lands and are obliged to drink water from ponds a filter of some kind is absolutely necessary. A very good one may be made by taking a barrel or box and boring a lot of holes in one end. Upon this bottom place a piece of blanket or stout cloth, tying it securely outside. Then inside the bottom place a layer of grass or moss which has been well washed. Over this goes a layer of sand and then a layer of charcoal. More grass, sand and charcoal in layers two inches thick will bring the filtering mass to the centre of the barrel. Over this place a round board bored full of holes and nail or wedge it in place. Then sink or anchor the barrel in the pond in such a position that its blanket shall be clear of the bottom and its top about six inches above the surface of the water. You bale the clean water out of the top.

If it be too much trouble to make this filter take a long narrow box, a couple of

joints of bamboo or even a long canvas bag that has been well waterproofed. Into either one of these arrange the layers of filtering material as before described and hang the whole thing to a branch of a tree, with a bucket or pot underneath it. Then keep the upper part full of water and you will have a full supply. If the worst comes to the worst, never neglect to boil the water before drinking it. In fact, I may write this down as a general rule in hot countries, for there is no class of diseases to be more dreaded than the dysenteric and no source of these more common than bad water. Boiling destroys many of the germs and makes the liquid safer. A plan which many men prefer is adding some form of liquor and it is claimed that the alcohol will destroy the seeds of disease. This is probably true, but drinking is to be discouraged when you are on a long trip. It generally happens, however, when you have had the fever badly, that your stomach will reject all food unless you stimulate it in some way, and under these circumstances you must either drink liquor or die. If you should happen to be in Mexico, let me urge upon you that you be cautious in the use of mescal. Any more destructive abomination it would be difficult to imagine.

There are several water collecting plants which grow in the tropics and which may be depended upon to give one a drink upon an emergency. Of these the best known is the pitcher plant. On the southwestern deserts the fleshy cactus will, if peeled, supply the animals for a time with its juice, but it is somewhat too drastic for human beings. The best rule, however, is to keep the water casks full at all times. If you are working with pack animals copper cases twenty inches long by fifteen by eight, well lined with tin and strongly made, are the best packages in which to carry water. They pack easily and are in every way suitable for the work. The cock should be placed inside of the case, open with a key and have merely a lip outside.

If you start on any extended trip a few tools will well repay the trouble of carrying them. Your list should include besides the axe which is, of course, a part of your outfit, a cross-cut saw, three chisels, three-quarter, one-half and quarter inch edge; three gouges of the same size, three gimlets from tenpenny size down, six bradawls, six saddler's awls and six shoemaker's awls. These should fit into one

of these handles, with the box in the upper part. Be sure to choose one with a thumbscrew nut for closing the jaws, and never take one that requires a wrench. One and a half inch auger with an eye through which to put the handle, one screwdriver with a reverse blade and half and three-quarter inch tongues, one engineer's hammer with riveting face, one pair of carpenter's pinchers, one pair strong pliers, three handsaw files, one rattail, one half round and one flat file, one rasp, one soldering iron, one ingot of solder, a pair of tin snips, a piece of resin, a lead ladle, nails, screws and pump tacks, and coils of copper and iron wire. All of these, with the exception of the wire, go into a leathern hold-all. This should be wide enough to allow the tools to lie across it. It should have two flaps, one on each side, to fold over the ends of the tools. At the lower end is placed a pocket in which a small supply of nails, screws and tacks is kept. This whole thing rolls up and ties in a secure bundle. It is the best arrangement for carrying tools that I know of and was invented in England; where it is quite common in the outfitting stores.

I must add to the list of gun buckets described in my June article one that I have only recently heard of, but which sounds to me as the best of the lot. It is that used in Bechuanaland, in Africa, and was invented by the natives. It consists of a bag or bucket large enough to admit the stock of the gun easily. This is attached to the saddle and hangs in front of the right leg. It is comparatively shallow, and the gun while standing in it rests against the right shoulder or can be passed under the right arm and held in place by passing the sling of the weapon over the shoulder. I confess to feeling disgusted over the fact that no white hunter or traveler ever had the brains to devise this most simple yet perfect arrangement.

In connection with the tools it is sometimes convenient to have a vise, and you can make one in a wooded country in a very few minutes. Saw or chop off a tree about ten inches in diameter at a convenient height from the ground. Eighteen inches from the top lash it firmly with rawhide or rope. Then split it and open the cut by driving wedges. Place the article you wish held in the open split, and knock the wedges out. You will find that your vise holds well.

In making up an outfit of camping dishes, a tin quart pail is much better than a teapot. For cups get some of those small wooden bowls used to hold coin and have metal rings *let in* on the outside near the top. They form better tea or coffee cups than anything I know of. The best traveling cup in the world is made of horn. Select a large horn with a sharp bend in it. Saw off the outer oval of this bend, making it as large as you can. At the end near the smaller part of the horn cut a straight handle from the edge of your cup, along the horn, three-quarters of an inch wide and six inches long. Then scrape the cup into a good shape and scrape this straight handle gradually down to one-eighth of an inch in thickness at the end. Soak the handle in some strong boiling lime until it is soft, and then one inch from the cup, bend it in the direction of the back of the cup, placing a small stick in the bend and lashing the handle on itself. Then let it cool. The handle thus bent forms a hook with which the cup can be attached to the belt, to a ring on the *carriol* or to any other place, and the cup will last indefinitely.

It often happens that you wish to drink when your horse is fording a stream. You may either have a leather bucket or cup, holding a quart attached to a string and carried in the saddle bags or you can take a horn of a convenient size, bore three holes in the open edge and fasten the string as before. This is also carried in the saddle bags. One of these two contrivances will be found very useful. And speaking of leather, buckets made of that substance are by far the best for camp work. Buckets are made of rubber and in a cold climate they do very well, but when it is hot they become soft. The leather buckets are easily carried and are practically indestructible. Should they get cut or torn through carelessness mend them by lacing the sides of the cut together with a leather lace. This will swell and fill the holes made by the awl, which, by the by, should always be a round punch awl and not one of those flat saddler's tools which make a little slit in the leather.

A handy thing to carry in camp is a German bootjack. No camping party which expects to be away for a long time should be without a tackle, with one double and one single block. It is useful for a dozen purposes and is always coming into play.